



MICHIGAN ADOPTION DAY

Giving thanks for families

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Midland Judge Dorene S. Allen to receive Daniel J. Wright Award Honor recognizes exceptional work on behalf of Michigan children and families; Allen's success in reducing juvenile delinquency cited

LANSING, MI, November 21, 2013 – A Midland judge who is leading the state's effort to end the "school to prison pipeline" is the recipient of this year's Daniel J. Wright Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by the Michigan Supreme Court and the Michigan Department of Human Services.

Judge Dorene S. Allen, presiding judge of Midland's family and probate courts, is being honored for exceptional work on behalf of Michigan children and families, including successful programs for young offenders.

Allen will receive the award at the Supreme Court's [Michigan Adoption Day](#) ceremony on Tuesday, November 26, at the Hall of Justice in Lansing. The presentation will be carried live at <http://courts.mi.gov/Courts/MichiganSupremeCourt/oral-arguments/live-streaming/Pages/live-streaming.aspx>, starting at 10 a.m.

Michigan Supreme Court Justice Mary Beth Kelly, the Court's liaison justice on children's welfare issues, praised Allen for "her steadfast dedication to helping Michigan's youth."

Allen, who was elected a judge in 2001, reorganized Midland's juvenile programs so that youths could be treated and housed in their home county, rather than being placed in other counties or other states; she also used evidence-based programs to rehabilitate young offenders.

As a result, Midland County's juvenile delinquency rate has been cut in half since Allen made the changes in 2008, Kelly noted. The juvenile recidivism rate has also plummeted: Of young offenders who participated in the Midland juvenile court's Day Treatment Program in 2011, 96 percent did not re-offend in the two years after their release from the court, and 100 percent of 2012 participants did not re-offend in the 12 months after their release. "Judge Allen's innovations have not only benefitted these youths, their families, and the entire community, but also have saved the county millions of dollars," Kelly observed.

Allen was recently appointed by Governor Rick Snyder to chair the newly-created Michigan Committee on Juvenile Justice, which guides juvenile justice policies and programs, aimed at reducing and preventing delinquency. Allen also heads the Michigan School-Justice Partnership, part of a national anti-truancy effort to keep kids in school and out of the juvenile justice system. The link between truancy and crime has often been called "the school to prison pipeline."

Allen has served on the boards of Midland Kids First, the Midland County Juvenile Care Center, and United Way of Midland County. Her honors include the Midland Chamber of Commerce's Athena Award, the Robert E. Weiss Award, the National Family Week Professional Advocacy Award, United Way of Midland's Shining Star Award, One Michigan Foundation's Mentor Michigan Award, and ARC of Midland's Outstanding Advocacy Award.

Allen graduated with highest honors from the University of Michigan, and earned her law degree with honors from Michigan State University - Detroit College of Law. After a career in private practice involving child abuse and neglect, probate, and family law cases, Allen was elected to the probate bench in 2001. She was re-elected in 2006 and 2012.

The Wright Award was established in honor of the late Daniel J. Wright of Grand Ledge, an attorney and longtime leader in child support and child welfare reform. Wright was a former director of the Child Welfare Services and the Friend of the Court Bureau divisions of the State Court Administrative Office.

Maura D. Corrigan, DHS director and former chief justice of the Michigan Supreme Court, worked with Wright on child welfare reforms during her tenure on the Court. "We miss Dan so much every day," Corrigan said. "But his devotion to the children of Michigan lives on in the work of others who dedicate their careers to issues that affect our kids. Judge Allen exemplifies that dedication and is a worthy recipient of this well-deserved honor."

Honorable mentions for the Wright Award include:

- Judge Thomas E. Nelson, chief judge, Berrien County Trial Court.
- Ms. Tonya Holmes, services specialist, Mecosta-Osceola DHS
- Mr. James McCormick, director, Lake-Newaygo DHS
- Ms. Samantha Lord, lawyer guardian ad litem, St. Clair County
- James S. Johnson, DHS caseworker (retired); volunteer and board member, Friends in Deed Washtenaw County